

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims to read as follows:

-- 1. (Currently Amended) A portable cased ~~protective case for a~~ stringed instrument apparatus, comprising:

a) a stringed instrument that has a neck ~~and connected to a base, the base having~~ with a sound board panel, a back panel, and lateral wall portions, ~~comprising: the lateral wall portions~~ being structurally connected to the sound board and back panels at joints;

b) ~~a)~~ an instrument case a housing that has multiple housing sections including at least a base part and a top part connected to the base part by a mechanism that enables the opening and closing of the housing, the housing having multiple interior surfaces;

c) ~~b)~~ the base part having an interior space ~~a void space area~~ that is receptive of the stringed instrument ~~to be stored, the housing having interior surfaces first and second including instrument~~ engaging support surfaces that engage the stringed instrument at the joints; and

d) ~~c)~~ the interior space including void space ~~being positioned to provide a void space that~~ is positioned next to and protects the central portion of at least one of the sound board and back panels of said instrument by preventing any from contact with the interior surfaces of said case.

2. (Canceled).

3. (Canceled).

4. (Currently Amended) The cased instrument of ~~protective case as in~~ claim 1, wherein at least one of said interior surfaces is padded.

5. (Canceled).

6. (Canceled).

7. (Canceled).

8. (Canceled).

9. (Currently Amended) A cased ~~portable case for storing a~~ stringed wooden instrument apparatus, comprising:

a) an instrument that has a body with sound board and back panels, neck, strings, a

bridge and a side wall ~~an angulated lateral portion~~ that connects peripheral portions of the sound board panel and the back panel at corner joint portions, comprising:

b) ~~a)~~ a case housing that is comprised of a pair of shells including a lower base shell and an upper cover shell, the shells being movable with respect to one another between open and closed positions;

c) ~~b)~~ a closure for holding the shells together in a closed position;

d) ~~c)~~ each of the shells having a protective liner;

e) ~~d)~~ the liners including a first liner that includes a first layer of material in the base shell that engages only the corner joint peripheral portions of the instrument back panel, the first liner spacing ~~and spaces~~ the center portion of the back panel away from the base shell and a second layer of material in the base shell that engages the side wall ~~angulated lateral portion~~ of the instrument;

f) ~~e)~~ the liners including a third layer of material that is contained in the upper cover shell that engages only a corner joint portion ~~the peripheral portion of the sound board~~ when in the closed position; and

g) ~~f)~~ the base shell having a recess that is shaped to receive the neck.

10. (Currently Amended) The cased ~~stringed~~ instrument ~~case~~ of claim 9 wherein the base part and top part are connected together with a hinge.

11. (Currently Amended) The cased ~~stringed~~ instrument ~~case~~ of claim 9 wherein the base part and top part are connected together with a closure clasp.

12. (Currently Amended) The cased ~~stringed~~ instrument ~~case~~ of claim 9 wherein the shells are of a material selected from the group that comprises wood, metal and plastic.

13. (Currently Amended) The cased ~~stringed~~ instrument ~~case~~ of claim 9 wherein third layer of material cradles at least a part of the angulated lateral portion of the instrument.

14. (Currently Amended) The cased ~~stringed~~ instrument ~~case~~ of claim 9 further comprising a plurality of clamps that hold the instrument body into contact with the first layer of material.

15. (Currently Amended) The cased ~~stringed~~ instrument ~~case~~ of claim 9 further

comprising at least one rack for supporting a stringed instrument bow.

16. (Currently Amended) The ~~cased stringed instrument case~~ of claim 9 wherein the third layer of material has a void space that is sized and shaped to receive the strings and bridge of the stringed instrument.

17. (Currently Amended) A cased stringed instrument, comprising: ~~case for housing and protecting~~

a) a stringed wooden instrument that has a sound board and back panels with respective peripheral portions, neck, strings, a bridge and an angulated lateral portion that connects the respective peripheral portions of the sound board and back panels, comprising:

b) a) a case that includes pair of shells including a lower base shell and an upper cover shell half that are movable relative to each other between open and closed positioning;

c) b) connections that hold the shells together in a closed position;

d) c) each of the shells having a protective liner;

e) d) the liners including a first liner that includes a first section of material in the base shell that engages only the back panel peripheral portion in the closed position and a second section of material in the base shell that engages at least a part of the angulated lateral portion of the instrument in the closed position;

f) e) the liners including a third section of material that is contained in the cover shell that engages only the sound board panel peripheral portion in the closed position; and

g) f) at least one of the shell liners having a first recess that is shaped to provide a void space that receives the neck and a second recess that is shaped to provide a void space that communicates with the instrument back over a portion of its area that is spaced from the peripheral portion so that the first liner contacts only the peripheral portion of the instrument back.

18. (Currently Amended) The ~~cased stringed instrument case~~ of claim 17 wherein the closure includes at least one hinge.

19. (Currently Amended) The ~~cased stringed instrument case~~ of claim 17 wherein the closure includes at least one closure clasp.

20. (Currently Amended) The cased stringed instrument ~~case~~ of claim 17 wherein the shells are of a material selected from the group that comprises wood, metal and plastic.

21. (Currently Amended) The cased stringed instrument ~~case~~ of claim 17 wherein third layer of material engages only the peripheral portion of the sound board in the closed position and at least a portion of the angulated lateral portion.

22. (Currently Amended) The cased stringed instrument ~~case~~ of claim 17 further comprising a plurality of clamps that hold the instrument back into contact with at least a part of the first layer of material.

23. (Currently Amended) The cased stringed instrument ~~case~~ of claim 17 further comprising at least one rack for supporting a stringed instrument bow.

24. (Currently Amended) The cased stringed instrument case of claim 17 wherein the third layer of material has a void space that is sized and shaped to receive the bridge of the stringed instrument so that no substantial load is transferred between a liner and the bridge.

25. (Currently Amended) A cased protective case for a stringed instrument, comprising:
having

a) an instrument that has a body and a neck, the body having at least one panel joined to a peripheral wall at a peripheral joint; said protective case comprising:

b) a) a housing that includes a base part configured to store a stringed instrument, and a top part configured to overlay a stringed instrument stored in said base part;

c) b) said base part and said top part being connected by a mechanism that enables the opening and closing of said housing;

d) c) said base part having a first area configured to store said the body of said a stringed instrument, and a connected second area configured to store said the neck of said a stringed instrument;

e) d) said first area having a base and a lateral wall;

f) e) said base of said first area having a central portion and a peripheral portion;

g) f) said peripheral portion of said base of said first area of said base part having soft

means; and

h) ~~g)~~ said soft means being configured to elevate said body of said stringed instrument within said protective case, so that ~~whereby~~ contact of said body of said stringed instrument with said central portion of said base of said first area of said base part is prevented.

26. (Currently Amended) A cased ~~protective case for a~~ stringed instrument apparatus:

a) a stringed instrument having a body and a neck, the body having a pair of spaced apart panels connected to a peripheral wall at joints; ~~said protective case comprising:~~

b) ~~a)~~ a housing that includes a base part configured to store a stringed instrument, and a top part configured to overlie a stringed instrument stored in said base part;

c) ~~b)~~ said base part and said top part being connected by a mechanism that enables the opening and closing of said housing;

d) ~~c)~~ said top part having a first area configured to overlie the body of the ~~a~~ stringed instrument stored in said base part, and an adjacent second area configured to overlie the neck of a stringed instrument stored in said base part;

e) ~~d)~~ said first area of said top part having a central portion and a peripheral portion;

f) ~~e)~~ said peripheral portion of said first area of said top part having soft means; and

g) ~~f)~~ said soft means being configured to engage or closely overlie the body of said stringed instrument stored in said base part, ~~whereby~~ so that contact of said stringed instrument with said central portion of said first area of said top part is prevented.

27-38 (Canceled)

39. (Currently Amended) A ~~case for housing and protecting a~~ cased stringed musical instrument apparatus, comprising: ~~of the kind~~

a) a stringed instrument that has a sound board with a central portion and a peripheral portion, a back with a central portion and a peripheral portion, a neck, strings, a bridge, and a lateral curved wall that connects the sound board and the back; ~~said case comprising:~~ ;

b) ~~a)~~ a housing that is comprised of a pair of shells of rigid material including a lower base shell half and an upper cover shell half;

c) ~~b)~~ a plurality of links for holding the shells together, allowing for the opening and closing of said housing;

d) ~~c)~~ said lower base shell half having a recess allowing for the storage of a stringed instrument;

e) ~~d)~~ said recess having a lateral wall, and a base with a central portion and a peripheral portion;

f) ~~e)~~ said recess being configured so that the sound board and the bridge of a stored stringed instrument will face said upper cover shell half when said housing is closed;

g) ~~f)~~ a protective liner that lines parts or all of the peripheral portion of said base of said recess of said base shell half; and

h) ~~g)~~ said protective liner being designed to engage all or portions of the peripheral portion of the back of a stringed instrument, thereby spacing the central portion of said instrument back away from the central portion of said base of said recess.

40-55 (Canceled)